

## CLAIMS

What is claimed:

1. A method suitable for projecting demand, the method comprising the steps of:
- (i) identifying a first set of merchandise;
  - (ii) specifying a second set of merchandise which is to be used as a referent for soliciting information relative to demand behavior for a pre-determined attribute of said first set of merchandise;
  - (iii) clustering the second set of merchandise for generating a demand profile for said pre-determined attribute of said first set of merchandise;
  - (iv) clustering the second set of merchandise for generating a demand model correlated to model-based demand attributes of said first set of merchandise;

and

(v) combining the step (iii) demand profile and the step (iv) demand model into a single encompassing model which is capable of projecting demand of the first set of merchandise.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said first and second sets of merchandise are disparate.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein said first and second sets of merchandise overlap.

4. A method according to claim 1, comprising the step of selecting the pre-determined attribute of said first set of merchandise from the group consisting of item, size, and location.

5. A method according to claim 1, comprising the step of selecting a pre-determined attribute of said first set of merchandise from the group consisting of item, size, color, and location.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein step iii comprises clustering the second set of merchandise by utilizing an algorithm which partitions this set into non-overlapping clusters with similar size profiles.

7. A method according to claim 1, wherein step iv comprises generating a demand model based on modeling demand as a function of major variables selected from a group consisting of price, promotions, inventory level, and seasonal effects.
8. A method according to claim 1, wherein step v comprises combining the demand profile and the demand model into a single encompassing model by apportioning the model-based demand forecasts, to the appropriate size distribution, using a size demand profile.
9. A computer implementable method comprising the steps of:
- (i) identifying a first set of merchandise;
  - (ii) specifying a second set of merchandise which is to be used as a referent for soliciting information relative to demand behavior for a pre-determined attribute of said first set of merchandise;
  - (iii) clustering the second set of merchandise for generating a demand profile for said pre-determined attribute of said first set of merchandise;
  - (iv) clustering the second set of merchandise for generating a demand model correlated to model-based demand attributes of said first set of merchandise;

and

- (v) combining the step (iii) demand profile and the step (iv) demand model into a single encompassing model which is capable of projecting demand of the first set of merchandise.

10. A computer suitable for projecting demand, the computer comprising:

- (i) a database comprising an identified first set of merchandise;
- (ii) a database comprising an identified second set of merchandise which is to be used as a referent for soliciting information relative to demand behavior for a pre-determined attribute of said first set of merchandise;
- (iii) a CPU receiving inputs from the database and comprising means for:
  - (a) clustering the second set of merchandise for generating a demand profile for said pre-determined attribute of said first set of merchandise;

(b) clustering the second set of merchandise for generating a demand model correlated to model-based demand attributes of said first set of merchandise;

and

(c) combining the demand profile and the demand model into a single encompassing model which is capable of projecting demand of the first set of merchandise;

and

(iv) an output display for showing the demand forecasts by the pre-determined attribute.